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ABSTRACT

The Adult Education Services for Teenage Parents program, funded by the Job Training Partnership Act and the State Education and Employment Demonstrations (SEED), was a pilot program designed to provide educational training, job readiness training, and support services for students 16 to 19 years old who had left school. Young parents were to be referred by the General Social Services Agency (GSS), given educational assessments, and grouped according to reading level. They were to receive a stipend for transportation and child care. The program, which served 37 students, had some limited success. The educational and child care components and the transportation subsidy were implemented. Teachers generally looked upon the program favorably and identified strongly with the program goals. Students looked on the program favorably and judged that their basic skills and knowledge of useful occupational skills increased over the course of the program. Six participants passed the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) exam. Problems were poor articulation between GSS and SEED, late receipt of funds for carfare and baby sitting, and lack of data needed to measure the achievement of program objectives. (YLB)

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Evaluation Section Report
Robert Tobias, Administrator
John E. Schoener, Senior Manager

PROJECT SEED
1984-1985
FINAL REPORT

Helen Weinberg, Director
Office of Adult and
Continuing Education

Brenda Fryson, Coordinator
Adult Occupational
Education Services

Prepared by the
High School Evaluation Unit

Dolores M. Mei
Evaluation Manager

James T. Langlois
Evaluation Associate

Warren Cohen
Evaluation Consultant

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New York City Public Schools
Office of Educational Assessment
Richard Guttenberg, Director

SUMMARY

The Adult Education Services for Teenage Parents program, funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (J.T.P.A.) and the State Education and Employment Demonstrations (SEED), was a pilot program designed to provide educational training, job readiness training, and support services for students 16 to 19 years of age who had left school. Program implementation was a joint effort of the Adult Basic Education Division of the New York City Board of Education, and the General Social Services Agency (G.S.S.) of the Human Resources Administration (H.R.A.).

The proposal stipulated that 80 young parents be referred by G.S.S., given educational assessments, and grouped according to reading level. Guidelines indicated that students were to receive a stipend for transportation and child care. Program objectives stated that students were expected to gain certain employment and occupational skills, and demonstrate increases in reading proficiency.

The program, which served 37 students, had some limited success. The educational and child care components, and the transportation subsidy were implemented. Teachers generally looked upon the program favorably and identified strongly with the program goals. Students also looked on the program favorably and judged that their basic skills and knowledge of useful occupational skills increased over the course of the program. Six of the participants passed the General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.) exam.

There were several problems in implementing the program. The most serious was poor articulation between G.S.S. and SEED, resulting in a failure to enroll the targeted number of students, and causing conflicts in scheduling between social service agency appointments and scheduled classes and counseling sessions. Another problem was the late receipt of funds for carfare and baby sitting. An additional problem was a lack of data needed to measure the achievement of program objectives.

Among the findings of the evaluation are the following:

- Funds should be made available for carfare and child care at the start of the program.
- More referrals should be made by G.S.S. and the referrals should be screened more closely.
- Coordination with social service agencies should be increased so that appointments do not conflict with program hours.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Adult Education Services for Teenage Parents, in operation from April, 1985 through August, 1985, provided educational and support services for 37 teenage parents 16 to 19 years of age. The project, funded by the Job Training Partnership Act (J.T.P.A.) and State Education and Employment Demonstrations (SEED) was administered by the New York City Board of Education, Office of Adult Education, in cooperation with the New York City Human Resources Administration (H.R.A.). The program site was the Brooklyn Adult Training Center. Students were high school dropouts receiving public assistance. Services provided included (1) basic education, (2) occupational training, (3) counseling, (4) life skills training, (5) child care, and (6) job referrals. The staff included one teacher/coordinator, one counselor, one skills instructor, and one office aide. The catchment area covered four Brooklyn neighborhoods: Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville, Bushwick, and East New York. Stipends were given to program participants for carfare and for child care.

Program Structure

The project was designed to serve up to 80 young parents. Students were organized into three groups based on reading level: those scoring seventh grade or above in grade equivalents (Group 1), those scoring between fifth and seventh grade (Group 2), and those scoring at or below the fourth grade level (Group 3). Training and objectives differed somewhat for each of these groups. Groups 1 and 2 received training in clerical skills, basic education (High School Equivalency), employment and job readiness skills, and consumer education. Group 3 received instruction

in basic literacy, career development, and consumer education. Because of low enrollment, Groups 2 and 3 were combined as the program was implemented.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Program Objectives for each group were as follows:

Group 1

- Seventy-five percent of the participants were to complete the course.
- Seventy-five percent of those completing the course were to acquire a specific set of occupational and employability skills.

Group 2

- Seventy-five percent of the participants were to complete the course.
- Sixty-five percent of those completing the course would acquire a specific set of occupational skills and attain a reading proficiency level of seventh grade, in order to qualify for referral into an occupational program.

Group 3

- Seventy percent of those reading below 3.0 in grade equivalents would begin to master the phonics approach to reading.
- Sixty percent of those reading between 3.0 and 4.9 in grade equivalents would increase their reading proficiency by one year in grade equivalents.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The Office of Educational Assessment/High School Evaluation Unit (O.E.A./H.S.E.U.) conducted the evaluation using three sources of data: (1) attendance and discharge data kept by project staff; (2) qualitative data including information on students' skills, plans for the future, and perceptions of the program obtained by administering two surveys to students, one upon entry into the program and one upon discharge; and (3)

interviews with the director of the program at the Office of Adult Occupational Education Services, and with the site supervisor. Although increased reading achievement was a program objective, the data were insufficient to assess this objective skills. The absence of these data was a limitation of the study. Evaluation findings regarding program implementation are presented in Chapter II, followed by student outcome data in Chapter III. Chapter IV contains conclusions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

RECRUITMENT

The Brooklyn Borough North Office of the General Social Service Division (G.S.S.) of H.R.A. made referrals to the program. According to program staff, this referral process did not proceed as planned. G.S.S. lost the services of three of the five case managers originally responsible for referrals. By March, 1985, the month before program start-up, only 70 referrals had been made. The SEED program staff estimated that 200 referrals would have been needed to recruit the 80 students originally planned for the program. Board of Education staff sent letters to the 70 students referred by G.S.S. Thirty-five of the referrals responded, and 22 students were accepted into the program. Those not accepted were viewed as having problems that would interfere with program participation. To bolster referrals, the SEED staff distributed an information flyer and information packets, and recruited through local agencies. An additional 15 students were brought into the program through these efforts.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Twenty-three of the 37 students who were served by the program completed pre-surveys on entering the program and 11 of them completed post-surveys upon discharge. Of the 23 students completing the pre-survey, 88 percent (N = 20) had completed tenth grade or less, and 48 percent (N = 11) had completed the ninth grade or less. Two-thirds (N = 15) of the students had been out of school two or more years. One-third (N = 8) of the participants had left school because they were pregnant. Other reasons for leaving school included being left back excessively, not being

interested in school, and running away from home.

Over 90 percent (N = 21) of the participants said that they had come back to school to get a General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.), while 70 percent (N = 16) said that they returned to learn skills and to help themselves get a job. About 25 percent (N = 6) cited the stipend offered by the program as one reason for coming back.

According to the pre-survey data, upon entering the program the majority of students thought that many of their basic skills were adequate. For example, only 17 percent (N = 4) thought that learning to speak and write better in English was a reason for returning. About 89 percent (N = 20) of the participants said that they could read and understand a job application, 83 percent (N = 19) said that they could read newspapers, and all but one participant stated that they could read subway signs. Two-thirds (N = 15) of the participants believed that they could do arithmetic computations at least pretty well, and 83 percent (N = 19) thought that they could understand spoken English very well.

When asked in the pre-survey about their plans upon completing the program, nearly 80 percent (N = 18) of the respondents expected to look for a job, about 30 percent (N = 7) planned to get some vocational training, and one-third stated that they would continue their education.

ARTICULATION PROBLEMS

The Income Maintenance Division of H.R.A. underwent restructuring during the operation of the program. According to the program staff, the problems caused by this restructuring affected the program's "holding power". The staff believed that with this population every aspect of a support system had to be in place in order to hold students. However,

because of the H.R.A. restructuring, funds for carfare, lunch allowance, and child care were not received until the week of June 7th.

One major problem faced by the program was the large number of appointments that students had with other agencies. According to staff members, there was no coordination between divisions of H.R.A. Such coordination would have allowed students to schedule appointments at times not conflicting with their classes. Counseling was given to students in order to assist them in dealing with these agencies.

CHILD CARE

The age of participants' children ranged from less than one year to three-years old. Just over half of the students (N = 12) had relatives care for their children while they were in school, while 21 percent (N = 5) said they left their children at a day care center. Students were given an allowance of one dollar per hour to hire babysitters (amounting to about $40 dollars per week). The funds for child care came late -- not until June for a program that started in April. Participants cited lack of childcare funds as one of the most common reasons for leaving the program.

COUNSELING

There were three parts to the counseling component: consumer education, individual counseling, and group counseling. The Adult Education Division taught consumer education including health and nutrition. Individual and group counseling were geared toward job readiness. Because the counselor originally slated for the program left just after the start-up date, counseling was carried out by the site supervisor who was experienced in employment training. The motivation of the students in Group 2

(fifth to seventh grade level) and Group 3 (below fourth grade level) was a major concern of the counselor and the rest of the staff. They stated that the focus on basic skills and literacy in these least skilled groups made it difficult for the students to see a clear and practical goal toward which they were working.

JOB DEVELOPMENT

There were two agencies responsible for job development: the job development section of the Adult Basic Education Division, and the Brooklyn Testing, Assessment and Placement (TAP) center. Three of the students had part-time jobs at a senior citizen center where they helped in the kitchen, did filing, and arranged clinic appointments. They received $50 per week and considered the work as job training.

III. STUDENT OUTCOME DATA

COMPLETION OF PROGRAM

A total of 37 students, three men and 34 women, received some services from the program. Of these, 22 entered at the start of the program. Forty-six percent (N = 17) of all enrollees were formally discharged before the program's August end-date. Another 11 percent (N = 4) either left the program in the months before August or attended only one class in August. The remaining 43 percent (N = 16) of enrollees completed the program. This outcome did not meet the program objective that 75 percent of participants complete the course.

The average length of enrollment was 34 days; 25 students remained in the program for at least two months. However, the attendance rate was not very high. Only 16 percent of the students (N = 6) were in attendance for at least 60 percent of the days for which they were officially enrolled. Program staff cited the lack of money for transportation and for child care as two major reasons for absenteeism. However, there was no significant improvement in attendance once this support became available. During the course of the program 16 students chose to leave. The most common reasons for leaving were the lack of money for carfare and child care. Other reasons included illness of mother or child, and the lack of a suitable babysitter.

SKILLS ACQUISITION AND READING AND MATH IMPROVEMENT

The evaluation team used pre- and post-surveys to examine students acquisition of occupational and employability skills. Based on questionnaire responses, at least some students believed they had increased

their knowledge of the skills taught in the program. Forty-four percent of the students believed that they learned something about the use of a calculator, while a third of the students believed they increased their knowledge of resume writing. Twenty-two percent said they had improved in typing, answering questions in job interviews, and in skills needed for finding a job. Even using these subjective data, the proposed objectives that 75 percent of the Group I completers and 65 percent of the Group II completers would have acquired occupational and employability skills were not met.

On the pre- and post-program questionnaires, participants rated their knowledge of 15 skills on a scale ranging from one (I don't know anything about this) to three (I know a lot about this). Pre- and post-mean ratings of each of these skills are contained in Table 1. As shown in this table, the mean rating increased in 11 categories.

The program attempted to include pre- and posttests in reading and mathematics for all participants. Each student was to take standardized reading and mathematics tests upon entry into and exit from the program. There were pretest results available for 18 of the participants in reading and 19 of them in math. However, only five participants had both pretest and posttest scores in reading and only seven had both scores in math. Results are reported in grade equivalent units.

Students with complete math test results gained one full year (from 6.6 to 7.6) in grade equivalents during their time in the program. Since their time in the program was five months or less, this is a substantial gain. However, it must be treated cautiously since it represents only seven of the 37 participants.

TABLE 1

Participants' Average Self-Ratings of Their Knowledge of Skills Taught in the Program*

Skill	Pre-Survey Ratings		Post-Survey Ratings		Mean Difference	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Keyboarding	1.8	.44	1.9	.33	0.1	.33
Word Processing	1.0	.00	1.0	.00	0.0	.00
Typing 25 words per minute	1.2	.44	1.3	.71	0.1	.60
Filing	2.2	.67	2.3	.50	0.1	.33
Using a calculator	2.1	.78	2.6	.53	0.5	.53
Using a dictaphone	1.0	.00	1.2	.67	0.2	.67
Writing a resume	1.6	.53	1.8	.67	0.2	.67
Answering questions in a job interview	2.2	.67	2.3	.50	0.1	.60
Dressing a job interview	3.0	.00	2.7	.50	-0.3	.50
Job training	1.3	.50	1.6	.73	0.3	.50
Finding a job	1.3	.33	2.1	.33	0.2	.83
Budgeting money	2.7	.50	2.3	.50	-0.4	.50
Healthy food for children	2.6	.53	2.8	.44	0.2	.44
When to take children to a doctor	2.6	.53	2.8	.44	0.2	.67
Kind of jog I would like to have	2.2	.44	2.2	.67	0.0	.50

*Eleven students rated each item on a scale from one (I don't know anything about this) to three (I now a lot about this).

- Mean ratings increased in 11 areas.

Students with complete reading test results gained one half of a year (from 7.0 to 7.5) in grade equivalents during the one to five months they spent in the program. One-half of a year is the amount an average student is expected to improve during five months of a school year. Therefore, the participants improved at a rate equal to, or greater than, that of average students in regular school programs. Once again, these results are to be treated cautiously since they represent only five of the 37 participants.

There were two specific reading objectives for the program: 65 percent of the students who began the program reading between the fifth and seventh grade levels would be reading at the seventh grade level upon completion of the program, and 60 percent of the students who began the program reading below the fifth grade level would have gained at least one year in grade equivalent units upon completion of the program. The data described above include only one student with complete test scores who falls into one of these categories. Therefore, the data were insufficient to determine whether the program's reading objectives were achieved.

FUTURE PLANS

Thirty-eight percent (N = 4) of the students responding to the post-program questionnaire had some plan for supporting themselves and their children. When asked what they would do when finished, three said they would look for a job, two said they would get into a vocational training program, and two said they would continue their education. Six participants from Group I took and passed the High School Equivalency Exam, five students from Group I have been referred for part-time employment, and one student from Group I had permanent employment.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The SEED program faced many implementation problems which interfered with its effectiveness and led to its failure to meet the original objectives. Funds arrived almost two months after the program start-date, and such factors as social service agency appointments and child-care arrangements interfered with students' attendance. Despite these problems, some students in Group I showed marked progress in preparing for the G.E.D. exam, and six students took and passed the exam. Some students also believed that they had made progress in learning some of the skills taught in the program. Based on the findings of this evaluation the following recommendations are made:

- Funds should be made available for carfare and child care at the start of the program.
- More referrals should be made by G.S.S. and the referrals should be screened more closely.
- Coordination with social service agencies should be increased so that appointments do not conflict with program hours.
- The possibility of having day care facilities located at the site should be explored.
- The program should collect data that will make it possible to evaluate the degree to which program objectives are achieved. In particular, objective measures of occupational and employability skills attained and pre- and post-reading tests are needed. Program staff should make every effort to administer both pre- and posttests to students.